

For the medieval era (Part IV) the author cites the opinions of the great Rabbinic authorities, Maimonides, Rahmanides, Eleazer of Metz and others, on magic, sorcery, prophecy, and telepathy—as seen against free will and predetermination. On these subjects there is no consensus of Rabbinic opinion (any more than there is today). Chapter 3 of this section is important, but extremely short. It concerns Nahmanides' (13th century) analysis of the biblical condemnation of magic, etc. Chapter 4 sets out the conflicting views of Maimonides (12th century) and Rabbi Solomon ben Adret (13th century) on magic, while Chapter 5 contains brief summaries of the views of other medieval Rabbinic authorities (14th–17th centuries). Opinions of marginally later times are summarized in what amounts to no more than a single page.

The author's summary is patchy and ill-considered, adding little to what he wrote in his Foreword. His only recommendation for the continuation of *Psychical Research* is that the subject should be conducted in a scientific manner.

As hinted above, the book is made up of a number of mostly extremely short chapters, ranging from 12 to 1 pages. This is the chief weakness of the work, for in no one topic is the reader provided with more than the merest introduction. One may suspect that the author was hard put to it at times to find more than one or two meagre references in the extensive Jewish literature.

However, this book is the first of its kind; and, as the author admits, it is not intended to be a full account of the subject. Enough is offered (not forgetting the excellent bibliography which will enable readers to follow up any point or subject to a greater depth) to present a comprehensive picture of Judaism and Psychical phenomena which is at once interesting, authoritative and to be commended (as a brief introduction) to Jewish and Gentile readers alike.

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THE TABLE RAPPERS. By Ronald Pearsall. Michael Joseph, London, 1972. 258 pp.

This book is a review of Victorian spiritualism which the author regards as a corpus of belief, understandable in its day, but likely to wither away in the light of greater knowledge.

It consists of a series of chapters, more or less in chronological order, and, for the beginner in psychical research, contains many

salutary warnings against the hazards which beset the explorer in this field.

In a short book of this kind one cannot cover all the ground, but in Chapter 9 (Spirit writing and drawing), where 'direct writing', no doubt deservedly, is explained away, more might have been said about the problems arising from genuine automatic writing.

In chapter 17 the author discusses vampirism and premature burial, two 'emotive' subjects which are not usually regarded as coming into the field of psychical research. The argument at the end of the chapter (p. 191) that ghastly incidents, such as premature burial, murder and suicide, might reasonably be expected to 'set up' subsequent hauntings is not supported by facts. The belief on which the argument rests is a relic of superstition, and should not be encouraged.

The author testifies to the valuable work done by the Society for Psychical Research, and gives an account of its foundation which differs somewhat from that given by Mr Fraser Nicol in his paper 'The Founders of the S.P.R.' in *Proceedings* 55, 341-367 (March 1972). In chapter 21 he takes a swift glance at some of the founders of the Society, and incidentally says (p. 221) that F. W. H. Myers in 1873 'had his first spiritualistic experience, coinciding with his falling in love with his cousin, Annie Marshall.' In fact Myers had been in love with her, and she with him, since before 1866, when, as Annie Hill, a parson's daughter, she was 'married off' to the well-to-do Walter Marshall, Myers' first cousin. Fred and Annie were an ill-starred couple who had not the means to get married. Their love never 'found his earthly close'<sup>1</sup>, and that was one reason why he sought so earnestly for evidence that he would meet her hereafter.

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THE PSYCHIC WORLD OF PETER HURKOS. By Norma Lee Browning. 297 pp. Muller £2.80

Miss Browning, syndicated Hollywood columnist for the *Chicago Tribune* was asked by her editor to investigate Hurkos' claims as a 'psychic'. Expecting to find fraud, she was reluctantly convinced that his powers were genuine. Her book, written in a journalistic style, contains many illustrative conversations that cannot possibly have been recorded at the time, but no index and no references. As she herself remarks 'I am a reporter, not a

<sup>1</sup> See *Fragments of Inner Life* by F. W. H. Myers, p. 17.